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BRITAIN's HAPPINESS,

AND ITS FULL POSSESSION OF

CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY,

BRIEFLY STATED AND PROVED.

BY THE LATE REV. DR. RICHARD PRICE.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION

BY THE EDITOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following little tract conſiſts ſolely of extracts from a ſermon preached by the late celebrated Dr. Price at Newington-Green, Nov. 29, 1759, and as he is well known to have been a moſt zealous advocate for the *Rights of Man*, his teſtimony in favor of our form of government, of the civil and religious liberty we enjoy, and the extraordinary degree of national happineſs we poſſeſs, muſt be allowed to be of great weight, and cannot be ſuſpected of any deſign to repreſent things better than they really are, which certainly was not the doctor's natural diſpoſition. It is true indeed that this diſcourſe was written and preached upwards of thirty years ago. But every thing he

then ſaid is equally applicable to the preſent ſituation of this country. Our conſtitution is in all its eſſentials exactly the ſame it was then, and our political advantages are rather improved than leſſened. The few alterations that have been made have all been in favour of liberty. Since that period, the judges have been rendered independent, general warrants have been done away, the influence of the crown has been diminiſhed, and the toleration act conſiderably extended: and that the preſs is perfectly free from all undue reſtraint there needs no other proof than the writings of Mr. Payne and Dr. Prieſtley. Add to this that our agriculture has been highly improved, our wealth increaſed, our trade commerce and manufactures carried to an extent unknown before in this or any other kingdom. And we are at this hour diſtinguiſhed above every other nation in Europe by unexampled proſperity at home, and the

higheſt degree of credit, reputation and conſequence abroad. Dr. Price's obſervations therefore in the year 1759, are perfectly true in the year 1791; and I muſt deſire the reader to compare the bleſſings he enumerates as peculiar to Britain, with thoſe which our republican writers, and the active partizans of the French revolution are ſo obliging as to offer us in exchange for them. They offer us a government of ſocieties and clubs like thoſe at Paris, the ſubverſion of all regal authority, the annihilation of the nobility, the converſion of the houſe of commons into a national aſſembly, the levelling of all ranks, the invaſion both of public and private property, the change of our bullion into paper money, and the entire ruin of our credit, our trade, our manufactures, our commerce, by the baniſhment of all thoſe noble and wealthy families who now find employ-

employment for the poor both in town and country *.

Theſe we all know (for the French writers themſelves confeſs it) are the *preſent* effects of the Revolution in France, of the *future conſequences* no one can foreſee the dreadful amount. And theſe are the comforts and advantages we are to gain by following the advice of thoſe gentlemen who recommend the example of the French patriots to our imitation. What we are to give up for them will be ſeen in the following pages; and if after peruſing them any man ſhall be of opinion that the preſent French

* It is an acknowledged fact, that in one ſingle claſs of manufacturers in France, thoſe I mean who uſed to fabricate livery cloths and lace, there are at leaſt 20,000 workmen reduced to abſolute beggary. What then muſt be the caſe in all the different manufactures of that kingdom? Take warning London, Mancheſter, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, &c. &c. &c.

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government is better than our own, and ought to be ſubſtituted in its room, he muſt have a moſt unfortunate and inacceſſible underſtanding, to which I ſhall certainly not endeavour to make my way by any further arguments. All I have to requeſt of ſuch a reader is, that he will embark immediately for France, to enjoy there upon the ſpot, in full perfection, and in all their native vigour, the bleſſings of anarchy and confuſion; and that he will permit us ſober citizens to remain here quietly under our own vine and our own fig-tree; placed as we are by a kind Providence in a land where, as Dr. Price juſtly obſerves, *peace, plenty, knowledge and liberty abound and flouriſh; a land which has the beſt conſtitution of government, the beſt laws, the beſt king, and the beſt religion in the world.*

A BRITISH MANUFACTURER.

BRITAIN's HAPPINESS, &c.

NOTHING can be more affecting than to think of the diſmal ſtate of many of the countries about us, where the noiſe and tumults of war fill every ear, where powerful armies march in dreadful pomp, ſpreading devaſtation around them, and numberleſs innocent perſons are driven from their houſes and families, and all that is dear to them. In thoſe countries garments are continually rolled in blood, and none can enjoy any thing in comfort or ſecurity. They live in perpetual terror.

They plant vineyards, without knowing who ſhall eat the fruit thereof. They carry ſeed into the field, without knowing who ſhall gather in the harveſt, and their wives, and their children, and themſelves, often fall a prey to relentleſs inſult and cruelty.

But WE are exempted from all theſe miſeries. We *can ſit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and no one maketh us afraid.* As long as we agree among ourſelves, it is ſcarcely poſſible that we ſhould become the ſeat of war. The ocean is our wall of defence, which guards us on all ſides, and cuts off our communication with the neighbouring nations, ſo that no hoſtile fleet or deſtroying armies can eaſily alarm our borders. We live in the quiet and full poſſeſſion of all our properties and bleſſings, without being in any danger from the inroads of enemies, or the depredations of lawleſs ſavages. We *hear* indeed of the

dreadful calamities and deſolations of war, but we *only hear* of them. We neither *feel* nor *ſee* them.

How great a privilege is this? How diſtinguiſhly happy are we to poſſeſs thus, among contending nations, and in the midſt of deſolation and bloodſhed, tranquillity and ſecurity, and almoſt all the enjoyments and ſweets of peace?

Another part of our peculiar happineſs, as a nation, is *the plenty and opulence we enjoy.* God has given us the appointed weeks of harveſt. He has ſatisfied our poor with bread, and crowned our ſeaſons with his goodneſs. We want nothing that can contribute to make us eaſy and happy. All the conveniences and even the elegancies of life are poured upon us in the greateſt profuſion. Such plenty have we, that we help to feed and cloath

other nations. Such is our opulence, that there is not a kingdom upon earth which can in this reſpect be compared with us. Notwithſtanding all the drains of war, we feel no very ſenſible ſcarcity of any kind. Our wealth increaſes continually. Our commerce is extended from one end of the earth to the other. Our naval force is unrivalled. Our enemies dare not ſhew themſelves before our fleets; and we are acknowledged by all the world as the ſovereigns of the ſea.

But there is a ſtill higher inſtance of our diſtinguiſhed happineſs to be mentioned; *I mean the Liberty we are bleſſed with. There is no country where this is enjoyed in ſuch extent and perfection.* The greateſt part of the reſt of mankind are ſlaves. They are ſubject to arbitrary and inſolent maſters, who ſay to them, "Bow down before us, that we may go over you," and who have

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their properties and lives entirely at their mercy. How melancholy a ſituation muſt this be; and how diſgraceful to human nature is it, that men ſhould be capable of enduring ſuch encroachments on their natural rights; or that, in ſo many countries, ſuch ſlaviſh forms of government ſhould take place, human beings deſcend, by hereditary right, like beaſts, from one tyrant to another, and the will of, perhaps the moſt ſilly and contemptible creature in a nation, be eſtabliſhed as its ſupreme guide and law?

But our caſe is totally different. While other nations groan under ſlavery, we rejoice in the poſſeſſion of liberty and independency. Our rights and properties are, in general, ſecured to us beyond the poſſibility of violation. Every man among us can enjoy the fruits of his induſtry without reſtraint or diſturbance. We can have no burdens laid upon

us without our own conſent, and the laws by which we are governed are not ſuch as a ſenſeleſs tyrant may pleaſe to appoint, but ſuch as we ourſelves by our repreſentatives concur in making. The meaneſt of our fellow-ſubjects cannot have the leaſt injury done him without being able to find redreſs. No life can be taken away, or any puniſhment inflicted on any one, without a fair and equitable trial. The king himſelf has not power to touch the perſon, to ſeize any part of the property, or to make the ſmalleſt infringement on the liberty of any one man in his dominions.

But our religious liberty is the crown of all our national advantages. There are other nations, who enjoy civil liberty as well as we, though perhaps not ſo completely. But with reſpect to religious liberty we are almoſt ſingular and unparalleled.

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In other countries not only the lives and fortune, but the ſouls and conſciences of men are ſubject to the abſolute will of their governors. In thoſe countries a perſon dare not ſpeak his mind about religious matters, or avow any opinions different from thoſe commonly received, without expoſing himſelf to the greateſt dangers. Nothing, ſurely, can be more diſmal than for men to have their minds thus ſhackled, to be obliged to receive without examination the deciſions of ignorant pretenders to ſpiritual authority, or to be deprived of a liberty which is the very laſt thing a wiſe man would conſent to part with, I mean, that of worſhipping God according to his conſcience, and of profeſſing thoſe principles of religion, which he thinks, come neareſt to the ſimplicity of the goſpel.

It is a diſgrace to human nature, as I have obſerved before, that men ſhould be

be capable of enduring *civil ſlavery*, how much more ignominious and daſtardly is it to ſuffer themſelves to be inſlaved in religious matters, or to follow blindly the direction of earthly maſters in things that concern their everlaſting ſalvation?

But we, brethren, are unſpeakably happier. We ſee the ſhameful folly of this. The principles of liberty have been thoroughly explained and are now generally underſtood and embraced among us. We well know that Chriſt is the only lawgiver of Chriſtians, that there can be no ſuch thing as human authority in religious matters, and that the office of the magiſtrate is not to interpoſe in any religious differences, but to keep the peace, to ſecure the civil rights of men, and to protect and encourage all good ſubjects of all ſects and perſuaſions. In this nation every one may judge for himſelf, and act agreeably

ably to his judgment without moleſtation or fear. A free and public diſcuſſion is allowed of all points, even ſuch as in other nations it would be impriſonment or death to diſcover any doubts about. *All ſects enjoy the benefits of toleration, and may worſhip God in whatever way they think moſt acceptable to him; and nothing expoſes any perſon to civil penalties or cenſures, but overt acts inconſiſtent with the peace and ſecurity of ſociety.* The reſearches of learned men among us have been puſhed farther than ever they were in any nation. An abſolute and unbounded ſcope is given to enquiries of all kinds; and the conſequence of this has been, that the greateſt improvements have been made in all the ſciences, and that we are now become the fountain-head of knowledge, and the inſtructors of the world.

Bleſſed are our eyes for they ſee, while thoſe of others are ſhut. Bleſſed are our minds, for they are free, while thoſe of others are fettered and enſlaved. Here light and knowledge prevail, and from hence the arts and ſciences diffuſe their influence, and are propagated to the nations around us. *In this iſland peace and liberty have fixed their abode,* and from hence ſuperſtition, perſecution, and ſlavery are fled, while in other nations they ſtill remain to confound and terrify and oppreſs the ſouls of men. How is it poſſible to reflect on theſe things without joy and exultation? How happy is it for us that our lot has been caſt in ſuch a land? A land favored with ſo many invaluable privileges and advantages. *A land where peace, plenty, knowledge and liberty abound and flouriſh. A land which has the beſt conſtitution of government, the beſt laws, the beſt king, and the beſt religion in the world.*

The conſideration of this our unparallel'd happineſs ſhould engage us to do every thing in our power to preſerve and defend it againſt all dangerous attacks. Who would not exert himſelf to the utmoſt in ſuch a cauſe? Who would not ſooner ſacrifice every thing in the world than part with ſo much bliſs? *What ſhame ought to confound that man who in ſuch a country can entertain one factious thought, or diſcover the leaſt reluctance in contributing his part towards its ſupport?*

How do I wiſh that, on this occaſion, I had a voice which could reach and penetrate the hearts of all my countrymen, *that I might make them more deeply ſenſible of their unſpeakable happineſs, and convince them effectually that there never was a people, who had ſo much reaſon to ſhew themſelves valiant*; that I might inſpire them with the moſt ardent gratitude to the Author of all good

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for their bleſſings, and engage them to pray continually for the peace of our Jeruſalem, to forget private intereſts and party prejudices in zeal for virtue and their country, and to concur, as one man, in ſtriving to exalt this nation to the higheſt, and to make it an example of all that is great and excellent.

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FINIS.

Five Tracts
by Amos Harrison.
& One by Bligh.

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